

percentage of home ownership, the shortest welfare rolls, and the lowest peacetime unemployment rate since 1957. We have fully restored fiscal soundness to the federal budget, with a budget surplus of at least \$99 billion—the largest dollar surplus in American history.

With America's robust economy, we have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to address the needs of our nation's working families. We must take advantage of this unique moment in time to reform Social Security and Medicare to preserve them for our children. We must ensure that these programs are there for our children in the 21st century just as they were there for our parents and grandparents in the 20th century. And we must raise the minimum wage to make certain that our workers are able to earn a decent income.

As we observe this last Labor Day of the 20th century, let us rededicate ourselves to this important effort. On behalf of a grateful nation, I salute America's working men and women and send best wishes for a wonderful holiday.

**Bill Clinton**

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

### **The President's Radio Address**

*September 4, 1999*

Good morning. I'm speaking to you today from Waterman Elementary School in Skaneateles, New York, where children, like those all across America, are now getting back to the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic.

When we took office in 1993, Vice President Gore and I charted a new economic course for America that took Washington back to basics—budget discipline, expanded trade, investment in our people. Today we received more good news that this strategy is working. The latest economic report shows that unemployment has now dropped to 4.2 percent, the lowest rate since January of 1970. In the last 6½ years, we've created 19.4 million new jobs, the longest peacetime expansion and the largest budget surplus in history. With this good news, it is more clear

than ever that the course we've charted for the economy is right for America. Now we must use this moment of great promise to meet our large, long-term challenges—to increase opportunity and responsibility for our citizens and to strengthen our national community.

Making the most of this moment requires us to meet the challenges of the aging of America by saving Social Security and strengthening and modernizing Medicare with a prescription drug coverage. It requires us to secure America's long-term prosperity by paying down our debt and getting new investment to areas still untouched by our recovery. And it requires us to continue to pursue an ambitious course to give all our children a world-class education; more and better prepared teachers; modernized schools connected to the Internet; a new commitment to higher standards, to ending social promotion, to more after-school and summer school programs, to ending Federal subsidies for failure, and for supporting proven strategies for turning around schools that aren't working. That, too, is the right course for America.

The risky tax plan passed by the majority in Congress is not the right course for America, and it would make it impossible to pursue these other objectives. I don't believe we should squander our surplus after being in debt for 30 years and quadrupling our national debt in just 12. I don't think we should do something that would imperil our prosperity or jeopardize our children's future by forcing crippling cuts in education, by failing to add a single day to the life of Social Security and Medicare, by failing to seize this opportunity to get America out of debt for the first time since 1835, or to give more investment to those communities that need it so much—the cities, the small towns, the rural areas left behind.

Instead, we can meet our most pressing national priorities and still have sensible tax cuts and extend our prosperity into the places it has yet to reach. That's the plan I have proposed. I believe that's what the American people want, and that's what I'll work with Congress, with Members of both parties, to achieve.

So as America goes back to school and Congress returns from its summer recess, our elected representatives have this big assignment and other important ones, as well. First, we must show we have learned the lessons of Littleton. To protect our children, Congress must pass commonsense measures to prevent youth violence and keep guns out of the wrong hands.

Now a full month has passed since House and Senate conferees met to work on this legislation; nearly 5 months since the shootings at Columbine. I'm still waiting, and America is still waiting for Congress to act. It shouldn't take another tragedy to shake them from the summer slumber.

Today I'm sending a letter to the Republican leadership urging Congress to take immediate action to send me a balanced bipartisan juvenile crime bill that closes the gun show loophole, requires child safety locks for guns, and bans the importation of large-capacity ammunition clips. If Congress passes it, I'll sign it.

To protect the 160 million Americans who rely on managed care, Congress should pass a strong, enforceable Patients' Bill of Rights. There's a bipartisan bill ready for action. The American Medical Association has endorsed it. So have more than 200 other medical and consumer organizations. It's high time for Congress to act, and if Congress passes it, I'll sign it.

With the number of students at historic levels, Congress should make the investments in education our children deserve. Here again legislation is ready. As part of my balanced budget, I've proposed to build new schools and fix old ones across our land. Congress should pass the proposal and fulfill the commitment it made last year to hire 100,000 well-prepared teachers to reduce class size in the early grades. Congress should also pass my proposal to stop social promotion and provide more funds for after-school and summer school programs and to turn around failing schools. If Congress passes these important educational measures, I'll sign them.

Maintaining our prosperity, paying down the debt, saving Social Security and Medicare, protecting our children, protecting patients' rights, bringing success to struggling communities and to all our children—these

are big assignments. But in every one of these areas, there is legislation ready for approval, ready for my signature, as soon as Congress proves it's ready to act.

If we work together in the weeks and months ahead, we can make this season not only one of action but of real achievement for the American people.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at noon on September 3 at Belle H. Waterman Elementary School in Skaneateles, NY, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on September 4. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on September 3 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast.

### **Letter to Congressional Leaders on Juvenile Crime Legislation**

*September 3, 1999*

*Dear Mr. Speaker: (Dear Mr. Leader:)*

As the Congress returns this coming week, I urge you to make it your first order of business to send me a juvenile crime bill that includes the Senate-passed gun measures.

The time is long past due to complete work on this bill. Before the Congress went on its recess, I asked the conferees to meet during the break and finish work on the bill. A full month has passed since the conferees first met, and I urge you now to finish the job and act immediately on this vital legislation.

The tragic shooting in Los Angeles just a few short weeks ago is the latest reminder that we must do all we can to keep guns out of the wrong hands. You have the opportunity to send me a balanced and bipartisan juvenile crime bill that helps prevent youth violence and includes the Senate-passed gun provisions to close the gun show loophole, require child safety locks for guns, and bar the importation of large capacity ammunition clips. These provisions will help save lives, and the Congress should make them the law of the land without further delay.

As millions of our Nation's children return to school, we have a responsibility to do everything we can, as quickly as we can, to